

33

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

COUNTRY USSR (Komi ASSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT 1. Vorkuta Coal Mines
2. Conditions in the Vorkuta Forced
Labor Camps

DATE DISTR. 21 December 1956

NO. PAGES 1
REQUIREMENT
NO. RD

REFERENCES

25X1

DATE OF
INFO.PLACE &
DATE ACQ.

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. [redacted] report containing information on the Vorkuta coal mines and conditions in the Vorkuta forced labor camps.

2. The report discusses in considerable detail the following topics:

- a. Importance of the Vorkuta coal deposits.
- b. Transportation and industrial facilities in the area.
- c. Production statistics.
- d. Administration.
- e. Geological conditions and other obstacles to be overcome in sinking the mine shafts.
- f. Types of mining machinery used.
- g. Established norms.
- h. Treatment of prisoners, including clothing and food allowances, medical treatment wages, entertainment, and communication with the outside world.
- i. Categories of workers.
- j. Vorkuta strikes in 1953.
- k. "Comrade Courts," created in December 1954.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

STATE	X	ARMY	X	NAVY	X	AIR	X	FBI	AEC				
-------	---	------	---	------	---	-----	---	-----	-----	--	--	--	--

(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X", Field distribution by "#".)

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

~~SECRET~~~~note. Comint~~

October 1951 - March 1955

Vorkuta has the youngest and northernmost coal deposits in the Soviet Union.

Development of the area was a result of the loss of Donets Basin coal production during German occupation and inadequacy of Moscow Basin production. In 1954 Vorkuta produced 10% of ^{total} Soviet coal production.

Only 15% of the Vorkuta deposits have been opened for exploitation.

Vorkuta is connected with the internal

transportation network by the 1700 km

~~long~~ Bchura Line. No other ~~trans-~~

~~SECRET~~

Attachment

25X1

portation facility connects Vorkuta with the north. The tundra is barely passable because of bogs. 1000's of prisoners died during construction of the Pechora line from Iulta to Vorkuta. Iulta is ^{at} the northern edge of the forest region.

Vorkuta coal deposits begin about 50 km north of ^{the city of} Vorkuta & ~~west~~ end north of Iulta. Branch railroad lines have been built or are planned to reach the eastern & western extensions of the deposits.

A line was built from Vorkuta to

Yunyaga (N66-39, E61-59)

Yunyaga, 40 km east of Vorkuta,

where a number of shafts will be opened

~~SECRET~~

25X1

SECRET

3

in 1956. Oshita coal has a lower calory content than that of the Slovens Basin. It is dirty and brown in the upper strata. Lennigrad is the primary consumer of Oshita coal.

25x1

There are 40 shafts in
the Volta area, of which 29
are ~~being~~ being exploited, 8 are ~~being~~ currently being
constructed, & 3 are in the planning stage.

Those being constructed ~~now~~ have started production or should be in full production ~~by~~ ⁱⁿ 1956. Some of the other shafts, No. 8 for a few

SECRET

25x1

~~SECRET~~

25X1

one of the oldest Volta shafts,
will be exhausted by May 1956.

The 1st shaft produces 1,250,000

tons annually, & is the only capital
shaft in Volta area. ~~at~~ The Soviets

define a capital shaft as one pro-
ducing more than 1 million tons annually.

#12, smallest in the area, produces

140,000 T annually. Average shaft

production is 300-500,000 T. 1953

production was said to amount to

10,150,000 T. Because of the strike

in ~~the~~ July & August, & ~~slow~~ ^{slow}
~~and~~ ^{slow} resumption of production, the

~~SECRET~~

25X1

5.

SECRET

1953 production ~~figure~~ suffered.

The Voronta area is administered by the Voronta Coal Combine, which was under the MVD until January 1954, and was headed by an MVD colonel.

The Ministry of the Coal Industry gave mining advice until January 1954, when it ^{took over the} ~~became responsible~~ Voronta Coal Combine. MVD offices

~~in 1952 coal was mined by hand~~ were replaced by civil officials

Shafts with ~~low~~ production, & those in outlying districts, are combined under one ~~state~~ shaft administration. Shaft

~~SECRET~~

25X1

Administrative II includes shafts 12, 14, and 16, with a total ^{annual} production of 880,000 ^{ton} ~~14~~ \$44. The large, central shafts are (directly subordinate) to the ^{coal} combine. The combine also controls a cement plant, brickyards, a large coal storage building, and 2 power stations. Industrial installations in Vorbita are served by branch railroad lines.

~~On the~~ ~~shaft~~ ~~shaft~~ during the war, the shafts ~~were~~ built down to the first seam and mining & driving of the galleries began simultaneously.

~~SECRET~~

25X1

25X1

~~Due~~ the driving of galleries often ran into ~~the~~ geological difficulties ^{and} production suffered, since the mining brigades moved about too fast to permit the gallery brigades to prepare the galleries adequately. In the new shafts, the shaft & main galleries were completed before mining began. Since ~~the~~ stone in the Volta area is soft & crumbly, galleries often collapse; our main galleries ~~are~~ ^{are} supported ~~with~~ with wood, and only the shaft itself is made of brick & cement. Mining is further hampered by floods.

25X1

SECRET

8

25X1

In Khat' Administrati^{on} II area, also
called the northern region, ~~so frequent~~
~~Many~~ seams lie under the Ural
River, and 50 percent of the seams
are met. Volsnta shafts ~~are~~
contain a lot of gas, and shafts
Nos. 12 and 14 have a gas concentration
of 3.5 to 4.5 percent, more gas than
any other shafts in the USSR.

Although ~~there~~ Soviet safety regulations
that dynamite is not to be used in the
presence of a gas concentration of 2.5 percent,
dynamite is used anyway.

Mining in the Volsnta area was

SECRET

9

SECRET

primitive for a long time because of transportation difficulties & general lack of mechanical equipment in the USSR. In 1951 only the 12 & 8th shafts used fully mechanical methods. In flat seams, such as those in the mother rayon, 4 men mined the coal while 15 ~~carried~~ ^{150 meters} the coal to the ~~wagons~~ wagons. Now-day even the smallest shafts have shaking chutes and conveyor belts. While dynamite was used extensively in 1951, almost 30 percent of the mining is now done with the Dombs ^{Do} machine. In

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

25X1

shafts not using this machine,
two types of
~~KEMPE~~ KEMPE coalcutters were
used. ~~The~~ Kempe machine is
extremely rugged and efficient. Type
I cuts ~~one~~ meter of coal at a time, and
Type II cuts 1.65 meters at a time.
Supports are ~~mostly~~ mostly wood -
steel props ~~are~~ occasionally used
and in the 1st & 5th pits. Wood
comes ^{primarily} from Kirov Oblast and the
Mordovia ASSR. Delays in delivery of
wood often occurs because of trans-
port & weather ~~problems~~ difficulties.
The ~~one~~ ^{single} trade is inadequate to

~~SECRET~~

25X1

~~SECRET~~

25X1

supply sufficient wood. In the 1953-1957 winter of 1, production often halted for days for lack of wood. In the pits, wagons of with a capacity of one ton were used. Until 1953, the wagons were pulled by hand; after 1950 electric tractors were used. Horses were not used for pulling the wagons.

On the Cobanta area, coal is said to lie in six seams, reaching a maximum dip of 1,200 meters. All pits are working on the second or third seams, & the maximum depth

~~SECRET~~

25X1

~~SECRET~~

... reached is 400 meters. Pits on the
edge of the field have narrow
seams. ~~the 12th~~

~~the 12th~~ seams of the 12th

14th & 16th ~~the~~ mines were only
80 cm to 1.2 meters wide, ~~which~~ ^{reaches}

the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th pits have

seams 3-4.5 meters wide. The

12th & 14th pits are mining the

Almud seam, which has a width of

only 35 to 40 centimeters. This coal

is said to be ~~particularly valuable~~

it is shipped apart from the other

coal. The ^{third} seam flows often,

& the workers are always in danger.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

13

Working norms vary according to the size of the seam, geological conditions, and mining methods. In combined 800 ft. & longer ~~shuttle~~ methods, the norm for production from a seam 800 m. width, ~~width~~ is 6.2 T per man. On a brigade of 25 men, there are 3 mechanics, 4 carpenters, a brigade leader, and an electrician. The norm of 150 T. to be produced by the brigade actually was produced by 16 men. ~~On a seam~~ ^{of the same} 35 to 40 men ~~hours~~, the norm per man in an eight-hour shift was 1.5 T.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

14

25X1

11 men, including

The brigade consisted of ~~11 men~~

3 mechanics, 2 carpenters, the brigade

leader, and an electrician. Actual

~~production for the~~ production by the4 men ~~fully engaged~~ in ~~the~~ was

therefore 4.1 T, not 1.5. It was

impossible to achieve the norm

in this mine. The brigade contin-

ually achieved 50% of the norm,

+ received punishment rations. In

work with the combine, the norm

was 16 T. Norms were ~~checked~~ checked

every 3 months by the mine

administration, + if changes in

~~SECRET~~

25X1

15

SECRET

conditions had occurred, the section leader could request a change in the norm. Norms have tended to increase over the last few years. In 1951 the brigade in the 12th shaft had a norm of 5.4T, & in 1955 9.6T. Since norms usually were fulfilled, because of reduction of sentence for overfulfillment, & pay, ~~production~~ increased.

For 110% overfulfillment of norm, 2 days were deducted from a sentence, for 120% - 3 days deducted.

In cases of continual overfulfillment,

SECRET

when the sentence is reduced already to $\frac{2}{3}$, the local MVD can direct release of a prisoner. As most ~~foreign~~ native prisoners are sentenced to 10-15 years katorga, they double these efforts to reduce sentence, without noticing the effect on their health of this murderous tempo.

Payment of prisoners was ^{also} introduced in regime camps in March 1952, after it had started in other camps at the end of the war. Prisoners received 90% of the wage paid free workers for the same work.

SECRET

25X1

17

With 100% norm fulfillment, a
miner in the 17th pit receives
360 rubles ~~per~~, with 9.68 tons^{per shift}
of working day. Thus he receives
1.4 rubles per ton. The workers
receive 900 rubles for the same
work, plus a ~~plus~~ differential of
50%, making a monthly salary
of 1,350 rubles. The other 60%
of the miners' wages goes to the
state. 3 years before release, 10%
is deposited in a special release fund,
which is paid the prisoner when he
is released. To the 60% of his

SECRET

25X1

~~SECRET~~ CONTROL

NOFORN

18

25X1

Wages which is withheld, the
prisoner receives from the MVD admin-
istration.

Clothing —

- 1 quilted jacket, 1 pair quilted trousers
every 2 years
- 1 cloth jacket, 1 pr. cloth trousers
every year
- 1 pair composition shoes every 2
years
- 1 ~~pair~~ set underwear every 6 months
- 2 pair foot rag & 2 handkerchiefs
per year
- 1 quilted wrap, one blanket,
1 mattress every 4 years.

Housing in a barrack 14 x 6 meters,
with 80-100 men per barrack.

Food consisting daily of —

500 g bread, 67 g fish, 37 g
meat, 150 g of millet, oats, or
barley broth, 1500 g of cabbage
soup, 11 g of fats & 30 g sugar.

~~SECRET~~

25X1

~~SECRET~~

19

Treatment in case of illness.

Since camps had to support themselves, with nothing from the MVD, the withholding from prisoners' salaries also paid salaries & allowances of the inflated MVD force. Pay of free miners seems high at first glance, but one must consider prices in the ~~frigid zone~~, above all for fresh vegetables & fruits, which are paraded out of proportion.

1 kg butter	3.2 R
1 kg rye bread	1.5 R
1 kg sausage (second quality)	2.8 R
1 kg apples	8 R
1 kg oleo	16 R

~~SECRET~~

20

1 kg gran. sugar	12 R
1 pr. gloves	350 R
1 sport shirt	90
1 suit, medium quality	800-1000 R

Miners don't receive free coal. Bought in small quantities, coal costs 82 R per ton. Because of the polar climate, this is a real strain.

Free workers pay 140-160 R monthly for a 1/2 room dwelling, without bath.

The common miner therefore is not in a very good position. Higher

jobs receive more - chief of the dynamite crew receives 80 rubles

per shift \times 26 shifts = 2,080

R monthly + 50% polar differential =

~~SECRET~~

3,120 R. A section leader receives basic pay of 3,500 R + different sort of bonus for plan fulfillment + bonus for good economy + bonus for safety in his section = 6,000 R monthly. Chief of pit 12, with 140,000 tons annually, receives 5,000 R monthly + ^{bonuses} premiums.

Plantation & Accident Prevention

Voruta workers have 3 categories. —

1. Underground miners for heavy work
2. " " " " " light "
3. surface workers

The categorizing commission meets three annually — June & December.

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

22

The commission is made up of ~~infringed~~ ^{infringed} doctors, under direction of a military or ~~or~~ ^{or} civilian doctor. The decision of the commission is final. A change of category can occur only at the next meeting of the commission or after a period of inability to work. In accidents, the ~~person~~ ^{person} is not put on the sicklist, unless his section chief issues him a certificate that he was injured in an on-the-job accident, not his own fault. Since each accident lowers the safety premium of the section leader, a certificate is issued only

~~SECRET~~

23

where life is endangered or bones are broken. Treatment varies according to the ability of medical personnel & equipment.

In the 4 pits of the north region (pit 298, pit administration 2, pit 7, & the TES), with 15,000 miners, there was only 1 X-ray machine - in pit 7. Accident prevention laws are strict & possible drastic punishment, but ~~these~~ obeyed only when a commission from Moscow was expected. Altho dynamite is forbidden in mines with certain gas content, dynamite was used anyway with full

~~SECRET~~

25X1

25X1

2^o Attachment

knowledge of authorities. Remarkable that no catastrophe occurred - in 1954 an coal dust explosion finally occurred - killing 25 prisoners. Pit administration II, with 1500 men underground, had 7 fatal accidents ~~in 1953~~ + 90 accidents involving hospitalization in 1954.

Leave is a word unknown to prisoner miners until 1953. The improvement after the big strike of July - Aug 53. gave underground workers up to a month's leave in special barracks, without pay, on special rations, if they had a ~~young~~ average of over 100%.

25X1

SECRET

25

fulfilment of norms. Indigenous prisoners receiving visits from parents, wives, or children could get 10 days' unpaid leave to spend in special barracks with their relatives.

In late 54 Vorkuta had about 45 camps,

totalling 100,000 prisoners. Maximum

number reached 125,000 in summer 1952.

Camps were either regime (R) or Vorkuta

(V). Regime camps (about 35) were

directly under MGB, while Vorkuta

camps were under Komi ASSR MVD.

All camps in the Vorkuta area were under

Guards Maj. Gen. Derenenko, who

SECRET

was also commander of MVD security

25X1

26 Attachment

troops. Prisoners in the Volonta camps were mostly criminals or political prisoners with short sentences. They always had wages, reduction of sentence for non fulfilment, unlimited correspondence rights, passes to leave the camps, & open bazaars at night - practically a free life. Regime prisoners however, mostly Soviet citizens connected with the German army, were sentenced to 10-15 years katorga. Another group were those from the western USSR who actually fought or ^{agit} agitated against the Soviets. ~~agitated~~

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

27

Third smallest was the foreign group - about 3000 people. The latter 2 groups were sentenced to 25 years as "seized" prisoners (захваченные). In contrast with Vorkuta camps, strict discipline prevailed in regime camps - from 2200 to 6500 barracks were closed, indigenous could write letters twice a year, & there was no ~~any~~ wage, reduction of sentence for more fulfillment, visits from relatives, or furloughs out of camp.

Beginning in 1952, conditions in the Vorkuta ~~camps~~ became ~~less~~ strict.

After the July-Aug 3 strikes they

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

28 Attachment

25X1

conditions in Regime camps resembled those of Voronta camps. Various amnesties freed the prisoners, limited release to live freely in the area, living outside the camp area ~~not~~ (daily) (reporting), shows that the area gradually was changing into an exile area. Prisoners forced to spend another 10 years in the frigid zone far from their families still weren't satisfied. They wanted to go home or to the Baltic & ^{countries} Western Ukraine.

The Voronta Coal Combine worried about its best workers & the plan,

~~SECRET~~

25X1

SECRET

so they tried to solve the problem by recruiting strenuously in Moscow, Leningrad, Yarbig, & Kiev, with the result that thousands came up to Vorbita, ^{west} promised heaven on earth, spent a few weeks in the murderous climate, & disappeared with the wind.

Prisoner camps in European USSR were then ~~enacted~~ & the prisoners were sent to Vorbita, refused to go underground, were driven below at gunpoint, & went on sitdown strikes.

Release of foreigners did the greatest damage to the kombinats' plan,

SECRET

Attachment

25X1

30

as they had been the machine & other big people, almost impossible to replace. Transformation of Vorkuta into an exile area brought financial problems as well, as mining by free workers made coal considerably more expensive. The Kominat will solve this problem by presenting the supreme Soviet of the Komi ASSR the proposal of paying miners a polar differential only after 5 years residence in the area. So the free workers, the only satisfied group in the area are starting to grumble.

SECRET

25X1

~~SECRET~~

31

All camps in the Vorkuta area
are ~~separated~~ ^{divided} into 3 zones, ~~separate~~
~~from~~

~~from~~ The first zone, the
regime zone, is no different from
the punishment camps - same con-
ditions persist as during the Berija
era. The second zone, the "limited
zone" (restricted) is inside the camp
area, & has the regime zone, surround-
ed by a 2-meter high barbed-
wire fence with ~~watchtowers~~.

Prisoners in ~~the~~ the limited zone
can get passes to leave the area,
& move freely 4-8 hours in a specified

~~SECRET~~

32

Attachment

25X1

area. They can visit restaurants & make purchases in the free settlements, which are close to the mine camps.

The rule against visiting "free" homes usually isn't carried out, & the MVD usually winks at violations of the rule. Some prisoners of the outer, limited area, receive permission to visit Varkuta, capital of the area, with its 70,000 inhabitants.

In the third zone, "free" zone, are prisoners whose sentences have been reduced $\frac{1}{3}$. This zone lies outside the real camp area, but has

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

33

the same sort of barracks.

These prisoners live just like the
spies in the area, & may not leave
the area. This free zone (restricted
zone) extends from about 40 km
north of the city of Vorbuta to the
station at Shum~~35~~ 35 km
south of Vorbuta. They may not
select their jobs, but are placed by
the plan section of the camp
administration; they receive 90 Draf
~~the~~ wages paid free workers, but
without the plan differential.

With permission of the camp ad-

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

25X1

34 Attachment

ministration, they may have their families join them. These improved conditions are a result of the strikes of July-Aug 53, which followed news of Benjas removal from office.

In the north rayon, mines 7, 12, 14, 29, 16, the TES construction camp,

+ cement factory struck en masse.

In this rayon alone, the strikes numbered 15,000. The high point of the strike was 25 July - 1 August.

For the first time the government had to hear the ~~the~~ demands of the miners. MVD minister Army Gen.

~~SECRET~~

25X1

35-

SECRET

Maslenikov was the govt representative.

The attempt to put down the strike with weapons was not fully successful.

In camps 12-14-16, 3 deaths, in camp 29 - 60 deaths. In spite of strenuous work by the MVD/MLB, it was not possible to ferret out the strike leaders in the various camps.

Unfortunately, front men fell victim to the informant system ^{a few} to ~~and~~ ⁱⁿ meso ~~and~~ sentenced to long terms in penitentiaries. Promises made then by the govt were only ~~hesitantly~~ ^{of} fulfilled. The 3-zone system

SECRET

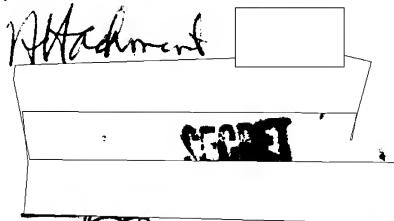
3rd Attachment

25X1

for Soviet prisoners owes a lot to the German prisoners who started laying down their tools individually in Nov. 1954, & could not be forced by any means to resume work. As this movement attracted sympathy & followers among other nationalities, the ameliorations of the 3-zone system were instituted to prevent rebirth of the strikes of 1953. After Benya's fall, prisoners noted an obvious feeling of uncertainty on the MVD. A high official didn't know if the directions

SECRET

25X1



he gave ~~the~~ one day

would be countenanced the next

by his superiors. In 1952, shanks

could still be punished with up to

3 months isolation (camp prison or
reduced rations), for chronic cases

with the strait jacket; a limit

of 7 days isolation was set in the

new regulations of 1 Sept 1953.

In habitual offender cases, a

camp chief referred the case to

superior authorities, who held

court on the the case & sentenced

the habitual offender to punishment.

38

Attachment

25X1

Prisoners no longer fear punishment
camps or solitary, as conditions in
those have improved. No longer
is there a punishment ration in
solitary - 300g bread & 100g soup,
instead, the same food as for
non-workers which = that of
workers - 100g bread & 10g fats,
the person in solitary must be
furnished mattress & blanket.
Camp leaders fear that prisoners
will report to superior authorities
on the general corruption of MVD
camp officials so they usually

SECRET

25X1

~~SECRET~~

39

punish shakers only with 7 days
solitary. In camps 12-14-16,
the 16 Germans there did no work
after January, & no report was
made to the MVD or Vorbitsa
camp administration. The camp
chief prescribed solitary up to 8
times for one person, a situation
resolved by repatriation of the Germans.

An innovation introduced in
Dec. 14 was the "comrade counts,"
composed of prisoners working for
the MVD, with a few of the
best workers added to give it a

~~SECRET~~

40

Attachment

25X1

touch of legitimacy. Members were recommended by the political officer & were elected in "public & free" camp meetings. The comrade courts advised the camp administration on punishment of prisoners, & judged the prisoners committing crimes in the limited & free zones.

In Dec. 53, Novyye Sver had an article on Vorkuta by the cccsu, depicting the "heroic role" of Komsomol brigades in exploitation of mines & construction of the city of Vorkuta. No Komsomolets has

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

41

lifted a shovel in the Vorkuta
area, tho many have served in
the watch towers. The city of
Vorkuta was built on the bones of
thousands of political prisoners.

~~In~~ summer 1957 ~~troupe~~ came
from Leningrad to put on plays in
Vorkuta. The troupe asserted that
conditions were better in Vorkuta
than Leningrad. They bought a
lot of materials & textiles which they
could not get in such ~~good~~ quality
or ~~so~~ variety in Leningrad.

A sign that things were better

~~SECRET~~

25X1

42 Attachment

for prisoners than their relatives,
was that prisoners sent money +
packages to their relatives.

Prisoners have lost the faculty for
independent thought. Executions were
the intelligentia + certain national
groups, ~~especially~~ Latvians + Lithuanians.

A corollary is the inability to
take independent action. E.g. -

The law states that every 7th day
is a holiday if the norm is filled,
but the mine heads always tried to
use the 7th day for overfulfilment.

3 Germans struck once when this

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

43

happened, against protests of the other workers, & were arrested, but later were treated as heroes. When the mine chiefs repeated this lousy trick, half the mine force struck, & on the ~~next~~ recurrence of the attempt, the entire mine force struck.

All Radio stations were heard, tho it was never discussed openly.

Letter communication to West Germany went on through free prisoners, & did not go through the censor.

Airmail took 8 days going & 10

SECRET

44

Attachment

25X1

days back.

On the big strike in 1953, the prisoners talked a lot about MVD participation in the strike. Data MVD officers accompanied wood shipments from the Kirov area, & asked on their arrival what in the world was wrong that Voronezh was not on strike. Another sign was the fact that MVD people worked themselves into strike committees.

A Col. Klesnikov, aviator & HSO, imprisoned in 1952, was a contrainerial figure & Lt. Col. Gurnich,

SECRET

25X1

45

25X1

SECRET

former MVD officer [redacted] was arrested after
the strike. He was supposed to
have been sentenced to 10 years in
Chusk, but no one believed that.

25X1

**SECRET**

25X1

Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2010/03/16 : CIA-RDP80T00246A031900080001-9

Page Denied

Next 9 Page(s) In Document Denied